

Building a Life of Love **“Love With Our Words”** (Part 3)

Intro: We’ve all had someone speak unloving, hurtful words to us. We discovered early in life that the saying about “sticks and stones may break your bones but names can never hurt you” was a lie! Broken bones heal. Sometimes the wounds that come from what people have said to us can last a lifetime! Words have power! We feel the emotions even decades later

God has called each one of us to be reflections of His love. If we are going to grow in love, one of the primary places is in our communication with one another. Do we love with our words? If people listened to our conversations, would it be obvious that it sounds like Jesus? Are we known for our loving communication? Do our words reveal that we are committed to God’s love? Today we’re going to explore - How do we love with our words?

1. Speak the Truth

Eph. 4:25 “Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.” (NIV)

Col. 3:9 “Don’t lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds.” (NLT)

A. Practice honesty with yourself

“...put off falsehood...” “...Don’t lie to each other...”

1. I realize that we all probably will be quick to defend ourselves claiming that we are not intentionally lying to people. But, is that an accurate assessment of our communication?
2. What does God consider falsehood and lying?
 - How often do you not reveal your true feelings to your spouse?
 - How often do you hide problems / struggles you’re going through from those closest to you?
 - How often do you work hard to maintain an image that you want other people to see? Social media plays into this. Some people can’t even post a picture without filters and major editing.
 - How often do you say “Yes” to something when internally you really want to say “No.”
 - How many times have we told others we’re doing “fine” when in reality, we are dying on the inside?
 - Let’s be honest...many times we say and project falsehood.
 - Share “lying statistics”
3. The Bible tells us to have a commitment to truthfulness in our conversations because we are all part of the same family and falsehood is associated with our old nature that we have left behind.

4. By far the most loving thing we can do with our words is to have a commitment to speak the truth to each other. To love with our words is to be loving enough to be truthful.

B. Practice truthfulness as a relational pressure valve

1. This is why some of you are relational volcanoes. You do not practice truthfulness / transparency in your relationships, therefore the pressure builds. The longer you hold in your feelings the greater the pressure until you finally blow! (Emotional vomit! – explain)
2. Then you blame everyone around you for how you feel while you were never completely honest with your emotional condition. (Yes. I was...I dropped all kinds of hints. Hints are NOT truth!)
3. When we honest, this becomes a relational pressure valve release. Truthfulness keeps the pressure at manageable levels. Without it, we all will eventually blow!
4. A commitment to truth allows us to be honest in a way that does not damage people. It allows the truth to be spoken in the context of love.

Eph. 4:15 “Instead, we will speak the truth in love...” (NLT)

5. You might say the truthful thing, but if it was not packaged in love, it was the wrong thing. Constant truthfulness allows the pressure of relationships to be maintained so that our conversation is also loving. Too much pressure and love goes out the window.
- Will you make a commitment to speak the truth? This is what it looks like to love crazy with our words.

2. Verbally Build Others Up

Eph. 4:29 “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” (NIV)

I Thess. 5:11 “So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.” (NLT)

- Our words can be used to destroy people / discourage people / wound people / or they can be used to build people up / give them courage / help them aspire to be all God created them to be.
- What category would your words fall into this week? To love with our words means that we have a solid commitment to use our words to build people up. Let’s understand how.

A. Learn how to speak words of affirmation

“...but only what is helpful for building others up...”

1. Words of affirmation are probably one of the most powerful forms of communication we all can learn to practice. It is communication that truly builds people up.
2. If you are a parent or a grandparent, speaking words of affirmation into the lives of your kids will have a powerful impact. Are we always pointing out to them what

they're doing wrong? How often are we affirming them for what is right?

3. Affirmation isn't just for kids. We all need it. Affirmation builds everyone up. I think back over my life and the people who had the greatest impact on my life have always been the ones who were the biggest affirmers.

- My mentor Dave and one professor at Multnomah. They saw me. The real me. The potential me. Affirmation is seeing another person beyond the surface – explain
- 4. Affirmation is about believing in each other. It is about affirming the strengths in one another. It is about pointing out what we appreciate / admire / it's about seeing potential in others. Affirmation is specific not just generic compliments (explain)
- 5. It takes no skill whatsoever to criticize each other. This behavior just comes naturally. For some reason we all can automatically see the faults and flaws in other people.
- 6. It takes a conscious choice...an act of the will to become a person who affirms. Yet, this is what it looks like to love with our words.

B. Learn to speak according to their needs

“...according to their needs...”

1. Affirmation is not mindless compliments or accolades. For people to feel loved and affirmed through our words it must be connected to their needs. This is the reason affirmation has such a powerful impact. This is what makes it feel so loving.
 2. When someone hits the mark with affirmation you feel loved / built up / seen / understood and encouraged. This is how we love with our words.
 3. This requires us to listen close enough to people so that we understand their need – their heart – their intent – we actually see them. This allows us to aim our affirmation to hit the mark.
- Sometimes it simply looks like understanding. – Conversation with Pastor Mike
 - 4. Who has God put in your life where He wants you to speak according to their needs? Your spouse? Your Kids? Grandkids? Co-workers? Friends? Will you love crazy?

3. Be Gracious and Attractive with Conversation

Col. 4:6 “Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone.” (NLT)

- What does gracious, attractive conversation look like?
 - A. Conversation that has a sweet attitude
 1. When we speak, there is more going on than just words. How you say something is as important as what you say! There is a specific attitude that carries our words to the people we are speaking to. (Tone of voice and body language)

- Let's use apologizing as an example. I am going to say the same exact words twice simply with different attitudes. "I am really sorry for hurting your feelings."
2. This doesn't just apply towards apologies, it applies to all of our conversation. Some people are simply easy to listen to because they have a sweet spirit and attitude in all their conversation. Others, are coarse and harsh.
 3. Some of you are the; "I just tell it the way it is!" kind of people. You don't even care how your conversation comes across to others. This is NOT loving with your words! If you don't care how your conversation affects others you are not loving!
 4. If you wonder why your spouse doesn't want to talk to you; or why your kids don't want to talk to you; or even why people at church avoid you...it may be that your conversation is not very gracious and attractive. (Verbal porcupines)
 5. Some of you are just argumentative in how you come across / some of you are very negative and pessimistic / others are just harsh and coarse / There's simply not very much graciousness in your conversations with people.
 - Loving with our words attracts people it doesn't push them away.

B. Conversation that is correct for the moment

"you will have the right response for everyone."

Prov. 25:11 "Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in right circumstances."
(NASB)

1. We all have experienced this verse. We all have had someone tell us something at just the right time in just the right way that blessed us / encouraged us / gave us hope / made us feel loved.
 2. This is the kind of person God wants to make us in to. This is what it means to love with our words. We become people who can say the right thing at the right time in the right circumstance.
 3. To become this kind of person, we first must care how we come across to others. We must be willing to embrace some humility in realizing that loving communication is not about me it's about those who are listening.
 4. Pride only cares about being heard. Humility cares about the effect our words have on the listener. Pride doesn't even care what the right response is. Only in humility do we care about the needs and feelings of those who listen to us.
 5. As I think back over all my years of ministry, the greatest regrets I have are in this area. How I wish in the earlier years on my ministry I was more gracious with my conversations. I was committed to truth, but often lacked the grace. Over the years God continues to build more and more grace into my communication.
- What about you? Is your conversation gracious and attractive? Do people feel loved and valued after they talk with you? This is what it means to love with our words!

4. Remove Everything Unwholesome

Eph. 4:29 "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths..." (NIV)

- What does it mean to remove everything unwholesome from our communication?
- Do you have a filter on your words? At my house we have a pool – 28’ round – 18000 gallons. In order for this pool to look crystal clear – I have a filter. Without it, the pool would become “unwholesome” What helps me have a verbal filter?

A. Remember which Kingdom we live for

1. Our language is a Kingdom issue. We are either going to sound like this world or we are going to stand out by sounding like we belong to a different Kingdom. Which is it?
 2. If we could replay everything you said this past week, every conversation you had, could we tell which Kingdom you identify with more? Did you sound more like this world or did you sound more like Jesus?
 3. How many of you have verbal double standards? You talk one way at work (cuss / swear / use profanity like everyone else) Yet you wouldn’t dare do this at church? I realize these are habits and they are hard to break. They are impacting your testimony as a follower of Christ. We must live the Kingdom we belong to.
- To love with our words means our conversation reflects His Kingdom. Does yours?

B. Remember our words reveals my relationship with God

Ecc. 5:6 "Don't let your mouth make you sin..." (NLT)

Eph. 4:29-30 "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths... And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God..." (NIV)

1. Our conversations not only impact the people listening to us, they also impact our relationship with God. Our unwholesome talk, whatever form it takes, grieves God. What we say can actually create a barrier in our fellowship/ intimacy with God.
 2. Allowing God to transform our communication is not just so people around us feel loved, it’s also so we can stay relationally connected with God. Our unloving words can grieve Him!
 - When you lose your temper and say those mean things, it not only hurts the people you said it to, it also hurts God...it impacted your relationship with Him
 - When you gossiped / told that dirty joke / when you beat someone up with truth with no grace / When you avoided the truth and lied / constant negativity
 3. How we talk says a lot about where we’re at spiritually. This is why one of the major areas of our ongoing spiritual growth is in the area of our language and conversations.
 4. I said ONGOING because we should never stop growing in this area. We never stop learning how to love with our words. I’m still growing...I’m still learning...I still blow it and have to ask for forgiveness.
- God is calling us to become people who love like Him. If this is going to be a reality, we must become people who love with our words.

1. This means we are committed to speak the truth
2. This means we are committed to verbally build each other up
3. This means we are committed to gracious and attractive conversation
4. This means we are committed to remove everything verbally unwholesome.

Love assignment:

1. Ask the Lord who you need to apologize to for your unloving conversation.
2. Follow through by going to these people face to face and ask for forgiveness.
3. Every day choose at least one person to verbally affirm / encourage / build up.
(Compliment / appreciate / acknowledge hard work / how they add to your life – face to face